

August 6, 2018



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20024

Re: Comments on FM Translators MB Docket 18-119

Summary: The FCC has shown great interest in allocating FM translators to existing AM radio stations as a way to improve local programming services. FM is a consistent signal 24 hours a day while AM varies because of nighttime and daytime signal differences. Over the years the public has exhibited a declining use of AM.

The undersigned filed the original request for the Mattoon Waiver and then subsequently requested the Tell City Waiver. Both were specifically for AM stations. The latter was denied, but the principals were maintained when the FCC granted the 250 mile program to move FM translators for AM use.

Today the FCC is challenged to try to decide the intricacies of interference between full-power stations and the primary service of AM stations to their local communities using FM translators as a primary delivery platform, albeit a secondary service. The same questions arise from FM translators rebroadcasting the signal of an FM HD, but the underlying issues are quite different.

The translator rebroadcast of an AM is of "existing" local programming. The rebroadcast of an FM HD is generally a new programming service and is in reality a new broadcast service to the community. Both have value, though the FCC's primary purpose was to strengthen AM's long time value to smaller communities and main street merchants. Those merchants more and more have turned their backs on AM as an advertising vehicle, thus making it harder for AMs to continue local service. That has changed as AMs have begun to rebroadcast on translators.

Comment:

If there is a difference between AM and FM HD fed translators, the FCC should give the nod to AM translators who are providing enhanced long time service to local communities. If a choice has to be made between the two, the AM station should prevail. If there is a conflict between a distant full-power FM and a local AM Fed translator, consideration must be given to the local service of that AM to its community and the community's local organizations and businesses. The FCC has always used "first local service" as a decision point in its deliberation of frequency allocation.

The specific questions.

1). FM translators that have interference complaints that can not be easily rectified should be given the opportunity to move to any frequency on the FM dial that will remove the complaint, if such a frequency can be found. If not, some special consideration should be given to the service of the AM (if the complaint involves an AM fed translator). If there is competition an AM translator should have first preference to move vs an FM HD fed translator.

2) FCC licenses have always specified a certain interference free protection and it is clearly stated on the recipient's license. I am not an engineer, but I have generally understood that to be the 60 or 54 dbu, but we always hoped for much bigger coverage than licensed/predicted. An additional buffer zone to 54 dbu should be adequate for making a decision and resolving a conflict. There does need to be a buffer zone. The FCC in its NPRM has proposed 54 dbu which includes a 6dbu buffer zone. We support this for co-channels. 1st adjacent channels do not need 54 dbu protection and should be somewhat less. 2nd and 3rd adjacent channels are not now an issue with digital radio dials. This approach helps to insure that local service prevails vs the distant high power signals from afar. We should note that we are licensee of two 100,000 watt, one 50,000 watt, and four 25,000 watt FMs, plus several class A FMs. We understand what that coverage means and do not want to discount the importance, but we also understand what the license says.

3) The number of listener complaints should be 6 to 10 and it should be essential to know on a map where they claim to listen/reside. Complaints from one location or the same family or group of friends should not be considered valid.

Looking down the road at FM Translator ownership and especially those fed by FM HD. If FM ownership limits are raised, particularly in the larger markets, the owner of an FM translator who receives an additional full-power station should be called upon to use that translator on an AM or to relinquish that translator for use by an AM station in that market. That could help meet the FCC's diversity objectives by helping an AM that does not have a translator and would like to have that opportunity. The larger broadcaster gets a full-power station and can transfer the format it has from the HD Fed translator(s). Thus the full power broadcaster gets an improved signal and the AM broadcaster (usually smaller and/or a minority) will get enhanced facilities which under traditional FCC criterion would be considered "in the public interest"

Conclusion:

The FCC's primary effort with translators has been to improve the community service of AM stations. We think our suggestions support that objective. We ask for favorable consideration.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bayard H. Walters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bayard" being the most prominent.

Bayard H Walters, President

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